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ABSTRACT

This action research project designed and implemented a program for the instruction of cooperative learning and conflict resolution strategies in order to increase social competencies. The targeted population consisted of two multi-age, grade 2/3 classrooms and one fifth grade classroom in a stable middle class community in a large midwestern suburb. The problem of lack of social competency (showing respect, taking responsibility, and making sound decisions) was documented by means of teacher surveys, anecdotal records, behavior checklists, teacher observation, and individual behavior plans. A review of problem data and solution strategies resulted in selection of two major interventions: direct instruction of cooperation through cooperative learning strategies, and implementation of conflict resolution principles. Post-intervention data indicated that the instruction of social skills along with conflict resolution strategies resulted in improved social competencies in most areas of social interaction. Students showed an increase in respectful, responsible, and cooperative behavior in and out of the classroom. (Fourteen appendices include sample teacher survey, anecdotal record, and brainstorming solutions worksheet. Contains 37 references.) (HTH)

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IMPROVING SOCIAL COMPETENCIES THROUGH THE USE OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND COOPERATIVE LEARNING

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An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

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ABSTRACT

This report describes a program for the instruction of cooperative learning and conflict resolution strategies in order to increase social competencies. The targeted population consisted of two 2/3 Multi-age and one 5th grade classrooms in a stable middle class community, located in a northwestern suburb of a large Midwestern city. The problem of lack of social competency (i.e. showing respect, responsibility, and sound decision making) were documented with teacher surveys, anecdotal records, behavior checklists, teacher observation and individual behavior plans.

Analysis of probable cause data revealed that students evidenced a lack of social competency related to working cooperatively and resolving conflicts. Home, school and society all contribute to this escalating problem.

A review of solution strategies suggested in research conducted by experts in the field of the instruction of social skills, combined with an analysis of anecdotal records of disciplinary actions, teacher observation, behavior incident checklist, and individual behavior plans at the problem setting resulted in the selection of two major interventions: direct instruction of cooperation through cooperative learning strategies; and implementation of conflict resolution principles.

The instruction of social skills along with conflict resolution resulted in improved social competencies in most areas of social interaction. Post intervention data indicated an increase in respectful, responsible, and cooperative behavior in and out of the classroom.

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

The students in the targeted second, third, and fifth grade classes exhibit a lack of social competencies (i.e. showing respect, responsibility, and sound decision making) that interfere with transfer of pro-social behaviors in structured and unstructured settings. Evidence for the existence of the problem includes anecdotal records of disciplinary action, teacher observation, behavior incidents checklists, and a teacher survey.

Immediate Problem Context

The targeted students reside in two medium-sized elementary schools in two suburban K-5 schools. These schools, part of a district with a total enrollment of 6,847 students, are located in a district near a major metropolitan area. They will hereafter be referred to as Sites A and B. Site A has the targeted 2/3 Multi-age classes and Site B has the targeted 5th grade class. Table 1 depicts the major racial-ethnic groups and total enrollment of the two schools. While the majority of Site A's students are white, Hispanic/Asian children make up approximately one quarter of the population. Site B's population is more than half white, with slightly more than one-third being Hispanic. Both Sites A and B have relatively small numbers of African American students.

Table 2 lists information about economic status and Limited-English Proficient Students. Low income students are from families receiving public aid, being supported in foster homes with public funds, or eligible to receive free or reduced-price

lunches. Limited-English Proficient students are those who have qualified for bilingual education. Sites A and B have a high percentage of low-income families and Limited-English Proficient (LEP).

Table 1

Racial and Ethnic Background and Total Enrollment as of Sept. 29, 1995

Site	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/P. Islander	Total Enrollment
A	68.6%	4.3%	16.9%	10.2%	539
B	57.8%	2.6%	34.7%	4.9%	493

Table 2

Low-Income and Limited-English Proficient Students

Site	Low-Income	Limited-English Proficient
A	17.6%	14.7%
B	21.5%	28.8%

The information on Table 3 tracks student attendance, mobility, and truancy. While the attendance at both sites is high and compares favorably with statewide attendance patterns, Sites A and B have nearly one-fifth of their students mobile each school year. Student mobility rate is based on the number of students who enroll in or leave a school during the school year. Students may be counted more than once in these figures. Chronic truants are considered to be those students who were absent from school without valid cause for 10% or more of the last 180 school days. There is

no truancy problem noted at either school.

Table 3

Attendance, Mobility, and Chronic Truancy

Site	Attendance	Student Mobility	Chronic Truancy	Number of Chronic Truants
A	95.6%	19.1%	0.4%	2
B	95.1%	19.6%	0.0%	0

According to The State School Report Card of 1996, the district is comprised of 446 teachers, of which, 97% are white, 2.7 % are Hispanic, and 0.2% are Asian/ Pacific Islanders. Females make up 88.9% of the certified staff, while 11.1% are males. The average teaching experience of teachers in this district is 12.6 years. More than half (56.9%) have Masters degrees and above. The pupil-teacher ratio in both schools is 17.2:1 which includes all staff and support personnel, while the pupil-administration ratio is 267.9:1.

Site A has not only ethnic diversity but program diversity as well. There are at least two single-age classrooms at each grade level, and two multi-age programs for grades 1/2, 2/3, 3/4, and 4/5. Parent choice concerning student placement is an important component at this site. There are English speaking and Bilingual classes for this K-5 building. The staff includes a part-time Social Worker, two full-time Learning Disabilities/Behavior Disorders (LD/BD) teachers, as well as full-time Art, Music, Computer/Writing, Library Media Center, and Physical Education personnel. Inclusion is practiced for physically and intellectually disabled students. Reading Core is a program whereby part-time assistants work with small groups of at-risk first grade

students. Reading support programs are also offered as an extra-curricular activity. Readers Are Leaders is a program where older students regularly read to younger ones. There is also an after school homework club for the fourth and fifth graders. In addition, an after school tutoring program is available for the primary students. Gang and drug education are taught through the Teaching Alternatives to Gangs (TAG) and Drug Awareness Resistance Education (DARE) programs. The DARE program is taught by a police officer from the community. After school intramurals are offered for fourth and fifth grade students. Working parents are assisted by a before and after school day care program. A community outreach night is a monthly event. This effort to increase quality family time has been sponsored by a partnership of the school and a local business, which donates the refreshments.

Site A is a 30 year old school that has undergone a fourteen month long remodeling and building program. A new administrative wing has been added, along with three new classrooms, an expanded Learning Center, and new computer lab. Also included in the building program was a new Multi-purpose Room. Students and staff were present during the majority of the construction process.

Site B is a 40 year old K-5 building that underwent major renovations five years ago. There are three single-age classes of Kindergarten and first grade, two second grades, two third grade classes, and three 2/3 Multi-age rooms. There is one fourth grade, two fifth grades, and three 4/5 Multi-age classes. In addition, there are the following bilingual classes: three kindergarten sections, one first grade, one second grade, one third grade, and one 4/5 multi-age class. Included on the staff are two full time LD/BD Resource teachers with one assistant, a half-time Art teacher, and full-time Music, Physical Education, and Computer teachers. The Library Media Center Director uses flexible access to work with classes doing research and other theme related projects. The school also includes five special education classes of

physically, emotionally, and mentally disabled students. These students are mainstreamed for Music and Art. Students in third, fourth, and fifth grades that excel in academics meet twice a week to work on class related projects. There is an after school intramural sports program for fourth and fifth graders. Also, a group of primary students meets before school and during lunch recess to improve basic skills. A group of intermediate students meets after school three times a week to work on homework. Extracurricular activities also include fourth and fifth grade chorus, a fourth grade dance club, an art club, and Student Council. For the fifth grade classes, the DARE program is conducted by an officer of the police department. This program is 45 minutes per week for a total of 17 weeks. The fourth grade also does the TAG program.

Issues facing the district include: increasing student utilization of technology, charter schools, shrinking income due to the tax cap, diminishing scores on state assessments for Reading and Writing, and citizen groups demanding accountability and change. The community is concerned about the influence of gangs and anti-social behavior exhibited by their youth

The Surrounding Community

This district, covering 8.5 square miles, is located approximately 35 miles northwest of a major metropolitan area. A commuter system links this community to the major urban area. It encompasses four suburban towns which consolidate into one district with nine elementary schools, grades K-5, and three middle schools, grades 6-8. These schools feed into two high schools.

This predominately blue collar community has a median income of $39,848 and has 12,495 households (1990 census of Population and Housing). The total population is 29,911. Ninety and one-tenth percent of the population is white, 4.6% is Asian or Pacific Islander, 1.8% is Native American, 1.68% is Black, and 3.4% is

defined in a separate category. Males comprise 48.85% of the population and females comprise 51.15%. The housing of this area consists of apartments, condominiums, moderately priced homes, and small subdivisions of homes costing over $200,000.

This community has a large and active park district offering many educational, recreational, and sporting programs for children and adults. In addition to neighborhood parks and ball fields, a new recreation/aquatic center was built five years ago.

Community concerns center around increasing gang activity and a deteriorating community appearance. There are many vacant storefronts which have prompted a community effort to bring new business enterprises to this area.

National Context of the Problem

Conflict is a natural part of life, but unresolved or poorly handled conflict has been shown to be counterproductive to the educational process and success in life.

> Indeed the single best childhood predictor of adult adaptation is not IQ, not school grades, and not classroom behavior but, rather the adequacy with which the child gets along with other children. Children who are generally disliked, who are aggressive and disruptive, who are unable to sustain close relationships with other children, and who cannot establish a place for themselves in the peer culture are seriously "at risk". (Hartup's study, as cited in McClellan & Katz, 1991, p. 1)

Furthermore, Walsleben (1996) states that concern over this issue has led The National School Safety Center to mandate an increased focus at a national level on cooperative solutions to problems that disrupt the educational process for all children. The behaviors that disrupt progress in education and life can range from minor

disagreements to outright violence. An increasingly alarming occurrence is the escalation of unresolved conflict leading to violence. Meek's study (as cited in Trevaskis, 1994), states that almost 300,000 high school students are attacked physically each month, and one in five students in grades nine through twelve carries a weapon to school. Toch's study (as cited in Lantieri & Patti, 1996) report that one out of every six young people in America knows someone who was seriously hurt or killed by violence. Lantieri and Patti (1996) further state that children are coming to school more frightened and angry than ever before, and their fear and anger walk right through the metal detectors at the doorways.

Traditionally, schools have attacked the violence, but not the cause, with diminishing effectiveness. Discipline referrals to the Principal's office, detention, suspension, and expulsion have been behavior management techniques used. Regardless of the magnitude of the conflict, there is national concern over the negative impact of anti-social behavior. Trevaskis (1994) contends that the rush toward conflict resolution programs in schools is also mirrored in society at large by a move away from the traditional behavior management strategies.

A sustained effort must be made by schools to train children's perceptions, reactions, and behaviors so that they can grow to become informed, responsible, and caring citizens. The work of Goleman (1996) suggests that intelligences are not static, but can be trained and strengthened. Emotional intelligence, which is a vital component in making good life decisions, can be trained. Goleman (1996) states that emotional intelligence encompasses social skills, which he defines as, "getting along well with other people, managing emotions in relationships, being able to persuade or lead others" (p. 6). In addition, Goleman (1996) asserts that there is a relationship between emotional skills and academic success. His work supports the idea that impulsivity control and delayed gratification enhance academic skills. The

significance of Goleman's work is that the earlier this training takes place, the more effective the results will be. Emotional intelligence is among the last of the brain's regulatory centers to be developed. The good news is that even if this crucial intelligence is not developed in the preschool years, it can be trained during the child's early educational experiences because of the brain's malleability.

The training of emotional intelligence and social skills cannot be left to chance. Lantieri and Patti (1996) say that schools today "must be committed more deeply than ever before to intentionally creating community and to paying attention to young people's social and emotional lives. We need a new vision for schools---one that includes educating the heart along with the mind" (p. 29).

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

In order to document the lack of social competencies that interfere with transfer of pro-social behaviors in structured and unstructured settings several assessment tools were used. Those tools include a teacher survey, a behavior checklist, anecdotal records of disciplinary action, and teacher observations and were used to assess the extent of the problem.

Teacher Survey

The teacher survey showed evidence of the extent of the lack of pro-social skills at both Sites A and B. Thirty-five surveys were distributed at each site. One-third of the surveys were returned at each school. Appendix A shows the survey that lists eight targeted behaviors that teachers were to observe within their classes. Any item that was checked "yes" indicated that 50% or more of their students were exhibiting that behavior. If "unknown" was marked, an explanation was requested.

The perceptions of the staffs at Sites A and B were assessed as to the prevalency of the lack of pro-social behaviors. Table 4 shows the behavior problems that teachers observed at Sites A and B. Responsibility, sound decision making, and empathy were the most frequently observed problems for the majority of the teachers responding to the survey. Site A showed a higher percentage of impulsivity while Site B's respondents indicated more evidence of tattling and lack of respectful behavior.

Table 4

Results From Teacher Survey Regarding Problematic Behavior

	Site A		Site B	
Behavior	% Yes	%No	% Yes	% No
Tattling	8	92	46	38
Name Calling	8	92	0	84
Respect	33	67	54	46
Responsibility	58	42	62	38
Impulsivity	58	42	23	69
Sound decision making	55	37	46	46
Empathy	55	37	62	38

Three staff members qualified their responses by indicating "unknown" under sound decision making. They explained that due to the brief instructional time they have had with the children they were not able to assess these behaviors at this time. Two other respondents checked empathy as "unknown", and gave no explanation of their response. Site B also had respondents check tattling, name calling, and impulsivity as "unknown". They explained that these behaviors, while absent at the time of evaluation, frequently seem to develop as the school year progresses.

The Teacher Survey indicates that Site A shows a perception that slightly more than 50% of the children have problems in the areas of responsibility, impulsivity, sound decision making, and empathy. Teachers at Site B feel that slightly more than 60% of the children have problems in the areas of responsibility and empathy. In order to track targeted behaviors a behavior tally sheet was developed and used at both sites.

Table 5

Number of Incidents of Problematic Behavior During a 3 Week Period

Behaviors	Week 1		Week 2		Week 3	
Sites	A	B	A	B	A	B
Respect						
Interrupting	29	5	29	7	25	5
Tattling	21	0	13	1	24	0
Name Calling	2	0	5	0	8	1
Yelling	13	0	4	0	3	1
Inappropriate Language	1	0	1	0	4	2
Calling Out	24	3	25	0	21	0
Pushing	4	0	5	0	4	0
Hitting	2	0	3	0	0	0
Kicking	1	0	2	0	0	0
Other's Property	5	0	7	0	3	1
Responsibility						
Following Directions	53	11	36	13	49	27
Listening	57	17	73	16	54	23
Off Task Behavior	40	5	68	20	58	29
Total	252	41	272	57	253	89

Behavior Tally Sheet

A behavior tally sheet, (Appendix B), was developed to record the number of incidences of negative social behaviors. The tally sheets were kept for the first three weeks of the new school year. Records were kept of respect and responsibility, which

were the two general categories determined to be of most importance. Respect included behaviors that were verbal, physical and related to others property. Responsibility, the second category, was divided into following directions, listening, and off task behavior. Each of the behaviors listed on the behavior tally sheet represents behavioral expectations of the staff that would give evidence of respectful and responsible conduct. The results of these tallies are listed in Table 5, which support that these expectations were not being realized at each site.

Site A, consisting of two classes of seven, eight, and nine year olds, showed a total of 252 incidents of negative behavior in week one, 271 incidences in week two, and 253 in week three. A number of trends were noted upon analysis of the behavior checklist. Interrupting, calling out, and listening at Site A have decreased slightly. This may possibly be due to the implementation of consistent classroom management strategies, home communication, and consistent consequences. Following directions increased in week three and this may be due to a heavier concentration of curriculum content by this time.

Site B, consisting of one classroom of ten and eleven year olds had 41 incidents of negative behavior in week one, 57 in week two, and 89 in week three. At Site B it is noted that numbers are lower in all areas of respect, which include categories of verbal, physical, and other's property. This may be due to the maturity and self-control that students gain as they get older. The numbers for following directions, listening, and off-task behavior have escalated due to the increasing complexity of curriculum content and expectations. The decrease in calling out is seen to be a result of consistent classroom management strategies.

Despite the fact that the numbers of observed behavior incidences are higher at Site A than Site B, it is obvious that both sites have social problems that need to be addressed. The frequency and type of problematic behaviors are developmentally

predictable. The children at Site A are younger and have impulsivity control issues in areas of responsibility: following directions, listening, and off task behavior. The older children at Site B also have problems with responsibility, but at this age level choice and peer interaction contribute to their not following directions, poor listening skills, and off task behaviors. Anecdotal records were one means of discovering the prevalency of the problem.

Anecdotal Records

The anecdotal records of disciplinary action (Appendix C) taken by the principals of both sites was reviewed to discover the prevalency of negative social competencies. Site A had a total of 0 incidents the first week of school, 10 incidents the second week, and 17 incidents the third week. One extremely serious situation, where a student attacked a teacher, resulted in a Level 4 Time Out, which is out of school suspension. No other incidents of that severity occurred. Of the 27 incidents, 20 related to behavioral problems and 7 referrals were due to incomplete work. At Site B during the first week of school, 9 incidents of behavior were dealt with by the principal. During the second week of school 11 students were referred to her for disciplinary action. In the third week seven students were referred. None of these referrals was severe enough for suspension; however, an example of not showing respect for others property was seen when a student had to pick up litter on the school grounds as a consequence for clogging a urinal with paper towels.

The evidence provided through the use of the teacher survey, the behavior checklist, teacher observation, and anecdotal records of disciplinary action indicate the presence of negative social competencies at both Sites A and B. In the next section probable causes will be examined.

Probable Causes

There are many factors that potentially contribute to social incompetency. This

complex issue includes societal, educational, familial, and individual components. Indication of the pervasiveness of this problem is evidenced by the amount of research completed on this topic over the last 10 to 20 years. A broad range of potential causes from site based and from the literature are indicated. Many of the causes noted by the teachers, such as economic disparity, were also noted in the literature.

Site Based Causes

The two open-ended questions included in the teacher survey were answered by all of the respondents. The first question asked, "Why do you think these behaviors exist at our school?" At Site A, the majority of the respondents felt that the home is the primary contributor to this problem. Things listed supporting this perception included: parents who are either unequipped or too tired to model appropriate behaviors, single parent families, lack of supervision and care of young children, no positive behavioral expectations, lack of discipline, children's ego-centric views being fostered by permissive or ineffective parenting, and troubled families that often lead to social and emotional disturbances in children's lives. The theme of the responses to this question for Site A clearly indicated a view of the ineffectiveness and even damaging role the home may have. Several other responses included negative peer pressure, poor coping skills, poor mental health, and societal or cultural differences as contributing factors. The argument could be made that poor coping skills, and mental health problems can be traced back to family input and responsibility as well. While peer pressure exists for children in all schools, the distinctive pluralistic nature of Site A has been shown to increase the problems that occur when people of conflicting cultural value systems are asked to live, work, and play together.

At Site B, the majority of the respondents once again felt the family is the primary contributor to this problem. Several teachers thought that the home has to be a stable environment where life skills are taught, character development is reinforced,

good role modeling is done, and positive behaviors are encouraged. They also felt that the school has a role to play in the character development of children. It was felt that schools have not provided consistent, thorough programs to train children. Additional factors that contribute to the problem are tolerance of negative behavior by society, a media that promotes negative role models, and alternative child-care providers who often cause a child to function with a "survival of the fittest" mentality.

The second question, "How do you think these behaviors can be improved?", prompted more nebulous responses. Site A respondents primarily expressed the need for parent education as a potential solution for this problem. This parent education should include instruction of such things as setting reasonable limits, clear and consistent statements of expectations, positive reinforcement for correct behavior, and establishing parent/school partnerships that maintain communication and promote involvement. The respondents felt that the school's role should encompass direct instruction that is clear, consistent, and long term. Among the important components of any program of instruction would be a behavior code, positive reinforcement for appropriate behavior, classroom follow up on behavior incidents that occur during special classes and unstructured time, role playing opportunities, reading and discussion of supporting literature, goal setting, opportunities for reflection, and the provision for a structure that promotes pro-social behaviors.

Site B respondents felt that the school needs to fill the role that the family has vacated. They felt any program of life skills instruction must include modeling, role playing, use of literature, conflict resolution, problem solving, using appropriate praise and consequences, and student ownership for their behaviors. While the school plays a central role, according to the respondents at Site B, the role of the family is still vital. Every home should be the place where children first learn the important life skills necessary for successful social interaction; however, where there is a void the school

must step in with parent education programs and life skill instruction. Families should also be responsible to provide a stable, consistent environment for their children. Teachers at Site B also felt that television and media need to self-monitor program content. Beyond the perceptions of teachers, there is the ever escalating negative impact of economic inequality upon children's lives.

Economic Disparity

Many advocates of children's issues are increasingly concerned about the problem of economic disparity. In fact, Molnar (1997) states, "Economic inequality in the United States is growing, and it threatens to tear the heart out of our civil society" (p. 37). Molnar (1997) also sees most recent school reforms (school vouchers, charter schools, for-profit schools) as contributing to broadening this destructive disparity. This problem is seen graphically at both sites in that student mobility has, and continues, to rise. The economic level of the families continues to decrease as the population changes from single-family homes to multi-family dwellings. Other factors effecting the economic makeup of these sites are the busing in of bilingual students from poorer areas of the community, and the influx of inner-city students, whose parents are seeking to provide a safer environment for their families. This inter-cultural diversity has added socially stressful situations for students and staff. Incidents of violent and abusive behavior among youth support Berman and Berreth's (1997) conclusions that "...growing economic disparity, the increasing acceptance of violence and abuse...and society's emphasis on self-interest and material goods" (p. 24-25) have fostered a sense of hopelessness, helplessness, and powerlessness among young people today. Berman and Berreth (1997) also feel that these conditions undermine children's feelings of empowerment in areas of helping and trusting others, and being able to see meaning for their futures. Media contributes to this lack of empowerment by reporting that " every 11 seconds a child is reported abused or

neglected, every four minutes a child is arrested for a violent crime, and every 98 minutes a child is killed by a gun" (Lantieri & Patti, 1996 p. 28).

Media and the Family

Bellanca (1992) describes problems facing the family today as being twofold. He contends that these two major factors are the dissolution of the "traditional" family, and negative TV role models (Bellanca, 1992). Families today have little resemblance to the "Leave It to Beaver", and "Father Knows Best" families of the 1950's. Now, children are coming from single-parent, dual working- parent, no-parent, and homeless situations. Stressed parents are often not modeling, instructing, supporting, and correcting the basic social skills their children need for social competency because they simply do not have the time. "The state of the economy now demands that parents work much harder and longer, so they have less discretionary time to spend with their kids than their own parents had with them" (O'Neil, 1995, p. 11). As a result of this lack of time, television and computers have become convenient electronic babysitters.

It is the electronic babysitter, and perhaps not parents, that is inculcating traditional values of society. Instead of stressing cooperation, honesty, caring, loyalty, kindness, and positive ways of solving problems, children daily see "shoot-em-up", "beat-em-up", and anti-social role models. Television's ideal families are now characterized by "The Simpsons" and "Roseanne" where parents are incompetent at best, and children are rude and disrespectful. It is these images and children's immature social value systems that often lead to negative behavior.

Increased time spent in front of a computer may also be a contributing factor. O'Neil (1995) is one of those who sees the negative impact of computers, as well as television. "More time spent in front of TVs and computers means children are not learning the emotional skills that we learn only by interaction with other children and

adults" (O'Neil, 1995, p. 11). Sites A and B reflect this problem in that many of the students come from single-parent and non-traditional family units. More than half of children at both sites go to day care, babysitters, or unsupervised situations before and/or after school. As a result of this problem, both sites provide before and after school day care at very reasonable cost to working parents.

Families face serious problems in a time when traditional family configurations are no longer the norm. Media complicates parents jobs in raising socially responsible children by showcasing negative role models in a positive light. Finally, while technology has expanded our capabilities, it has also promotes more isolation from social contexts for many children outside of and within their families.

Abused Children

In addition to the stresses that face all families, is the particularly toxic environment of the abused child. Batsche, (as cited in Foltz-Gray, 1996, p. 21) reported that "children who come from homes where parents prefer physical punishment, where parents teach children to strike back, or are inconsistent or over permissive", are creating breeding grounds for bullies and other anti-social problem-solving strategies. These negative behaviors are becoming more and more evident in the school setting. As of the 1997-1998 school year, Site A has increased their part-time Social Worker to full-time status in order to meet the ever-escalating social/emotional needs of its student population. Site B has two half-time Social Workers who are finding the social/emotional demands of their student population overwhelming and increasingly difficult to manage effectively.

> It is clear that children are in trouble. Garbarino states that in 1976, ten per cent of all children studied were judged to be doing so poorly that they could be candidates for therapy (even though only a third of these kids actually received such therapy). By 1989, 18% of the

> children were doing badly enough in their behavior and development to warrant needing therapy (and about half were getting it). (Garbarino, 1997, p. 13)

It is no longer uncommon for children at both sites to receive professional therapy outside of school, as the limited amount of time the school Social Worker can spend with these children is deemed unsatisfactory. The impact on the school environment is quite dramatic, as teachers spend more and more time dealing with the fall out of these social/emotional problems, but with no training in how to effectively do so.

Lack of Training

Traditionally schools have contributed to this problem in a number of ways. It is the perception of the teacher/researchers that many teachers have not received the necessary training to deal with the rise in social/emotional problems of their student populations. Elias et al. (1997) supports this observation by stating, "Administrators report that some teachers feel uncertain about social and emotional learning because of a lack of training" (p. 18). Site A has recently begun a building-wide focus on solving conflicts in positive ways. There has been emphasis on respect and responsibility. Site B's approach has been to utilize the Social Workers' expertise to problem-solve with troubled students. There has been staff resistance to adding any more components to an already overloaded curriculum at both sites. Over the last 10 years, state and district mandates have added more programs, core curriculum, and objectives for the classroom teacher to incorporate. During this time, little has been removed from the curriculum. Fogarty's (1992) concept of "selective abandonment" has not been practiced by all staff at these two sites. Lack of teacher training is a deterrent to promoting positive social behaviors. Not only does the overloaded curriculum and lack of teacher training contribute to the problem, but a state mandated testing program is also seen as a competitive deterrent to promoting positive social

behaviors.

Testing

In addition to an overloaded curriculum, and lack of teacher training, a mandated state-testing program has created competition and stress at district, school, and individual levels. Both children and teachers feel the pressure of this competition which compounds the stress already existent in their lives. Both suburban sites experience a high degree of academic and social competition which some researchers feel may lead to a sense of inadequacy. Rimm (1997) states perceived inadequacy is a common concern for many of these children, and they do not have:

> an internal locus of control, nor do they function well in competition. The lack of internal locus of control translates to a missed connection between effort and outcome: underachievers haven't learned about hard work. Underachieving students are often magical in their thinking: they expect to be anointed to fame and fortune...If they put forth effort, they no longer have an excuse to protect their fragile self-concepts. They've defined smart as "easy," and anything that is difficult threatens their sense of being smart. (Rimm, 1997, p.18-19)

Kovalik, who is a proponent of brain-compatible classrooms, believes that if children are fearful, they can not learn. This is not just a choice on their part, but is a result of how the brain functions (Kovalik & Olsen, 1994). It is clear to see that schools have external and internal social/emotional pressures that are causing educators to embrace a new instructional paradigm.

CHAPTER 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

According to the literature reviewed, solutions to social incompetency are complex and shared by society as a whole. Therefore any lasting solution for developing social competency, like a puzzle which is made up of many pieces, must allow for the individual components of society, family, and school to form an integrated, holistic plan.

Society

There are a number of solutions within the realm of society. These solutions address economic disparity and loss of public trust.

Economic disparity. Molnar (1997) feels that the issue of economic disparity is central to the problem of the escalation of incivility in our society. He concludes:

> Unless and until we find the political will to redistribute the wealth and soften the inequality growing like a cancer on our civic culture, we will have a society that is ever less civil and ever more divided into warring camps, regardless of how public education is reorganized or curriculum and instruction programs changed. (Molnar, 1997, p. 39)

This flies in the face of the typical band aid approach of public education which has been practiced for the last 150 years. Typically, public education has seen curriculum and program change as the answer to the problem. Instead, Molnar (1997) suggests that a deep surgical procedure of social reform must take place. This may seem

radical and socialistic in a Democratic society. Yet, as Democratic principles, knowledge and traditions are taught to the next generation, every child should be assured that he/she will have value as well as an opportunity to succeed in life regardless of his/her economic status. The distribution of wealth is not the only contribution society can make.

Doyle (1997) feels that a supportive social order is needed in order for children to live and thrive. Society needs to give to children, and children need to reciprocate by giving back to society. This means that parents and other adult mentors must create ways for children to serve society, via community projects or service opportunities, in order to strengthen their feelings of connectedness and empowerment. As children develop a sense of social responsibility, their personal investment in the well being of others also has the positive personal effect of developing responsibility, respect, self-discipline, integrity, and empathy (Berman & Berreth, 1997). This effort can be undermined by the lack of morality exhibited by public figures.

Loss of public trust. The literature also suggests that there is a national concern over the loss of public trust as political and religious leaders continue to undermine the values of trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, justice, fairness, integrity, and caring. Sadly for children, this lack of moral integrity is daily viewed on televisions in their homes. Political and religious leaders must be called to a higher standard of integrity. Social skills and moral values can only be "developed through modeling, direct instruction, experience, and continual practice" (Berman & Berreth, 1997, p. 25). Children need to be able to respect the rhetoric and practice of our national and community leaders. Kohn (1997) agrees that adults are desperately needed to promote moral growth, and to guide, model, challenge, and help children see the connections between their actions and the effect of these actions on other people.

Despite the importance of observed integrity among religious and community leaders, the important pivotal role of the family can not be underestimated.

Family

The parental role, says Doyle (1997) is extremely important in developing socially competent children. He suggests that nurturing parents, in combination with a supportive social order, are mandated to primarily shape children's character so that they will be better people. Rimm (1997) reminds us that the vital role parents play in teaching and parenting is often done intuitively. If their own parenting was productive, then intuition will work well for them, but if the parent's early family or school life was not productive, this intuition may now lead them astray. McClellan & Katz (1992) warn that if children do not achieve minimum social competency by the age of six they are potentially at risk throughout their lives. In order to counteract faulty parent intuition and meet the criteria of early positive social development, parent education is vital says Rimm (1997). Jones, (as cited by Lantieri & Patti, 1996) stated: "Children don't always do what you say, but often do what you do. If we demonstrate peaceful responses at home, our children learn by example" (p. 30). Children need role models and heroes. First and foremost among those should always be their parents.

Besides being role models, parents can build family wholeness and their child's self-esteem in a number of practical ways. Walsleben (1996) suggests these positive strategies: praise and hug your child daily, develop family customs and rituals, listen to your child, face life with humor, build civic consciousness, help them discover their interests and strengths, encourage friendships, practice and reinforce courtesy, set limits and consequences, practice fair and consistent discipline, and become familiar with your child's school and teachers. Rimm (1997) would add to these the importance of home strategies such as building study routines, bedtime and morning independence routines, organizational and attention techniques, independence,

creativity, united parenting and respect.

Unfortunately parents have not always taken up the mantle of their vital role in developing their children's social competencies. This places increasing demands upon public education to fill the gap left by some parent's lack of training and involvement in forming their child's social value system.

School

Parker (1997) feels that when social competency is not learned within the home, the school takes on a role similar to the village square or marketplace of the past. It becomes a place where children can develop the habits and character traits necessary for positive interaction with others. These characteristics are courtesies, manners, tolerance, respect, sense of justice, and acceptance of others' points of view. Schools must identify the students who are not demonstrating these traits as being socially "at risk". It is the responsibility of the schools to develop early intervention strategies. As previously noted in Chapter One, Goleman (1996) asserted that emotional intelligence (competencies) is virtually all learned. If the child can be taught to manage his anger, calm and soothe himself, and be empathic, he develops a life-long strength as well as literally shaping the brain circuits for that response. Two essential aspects of social skill instruction are Cooperative Learning and Conflict Resolution.

Cooperative learning. Johnson and Johnson (1992), pioneers in the field of Cooperative Learning, state:

> Cooperative Learning is the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each others' learning. The effectiveness of cooperative efforts depends on how well positive interdependence, face-to-face promotive interaction, individual accountability, interpersonal and small group skills,

and group processing are structured within the learning situation. (p. 186) When these strategies are utilized there are many positive outcomes. Freiberg (1996) feels that cooperative activity fosters self-discipline, caring, personal ownership, involvement, and growing trust. These kinds of outcomes provide for the establishment of a moral community wherein safety, which is necessary for learning, exists. In addition to cooperative learning, the instruction of conflict resolution fosters social competencies.

Conflict resolution. Conflict Resolution is the second important component in the instruction of social skills. While there are many different intervention programs, and researchers may use different terms, conflict resolution is a strategy of choice in most of the literature reviewed (Berman & Berreth, 1997; Cummings & Haggerty, 1997; Foltz-Gray, 1996; Freiberg, 1996; Lantieri & Patti, 1996; Parker, 1997; Rimm, 1997; Weissberg et al, 1997). According to Rimm (1997), anti-arguing strategies will defuse potential power struggles, and encourage creative thinking about how to resolve conflicts, whereby increasing respect between the individuals. When an adult listens, compromises, and engages a child in healthy dialogue concerning conflict resolution, a win-win situation takes place. Rimm also feels that this increases the student's repertoire of scripts for positive social problem solving. Rimm further states that included in the direct instruction of Conflict Resolution should be concepts of empathy, self-discipline, persistence, delayed gratification, decision making, and perspective taking skills. Berman and Berreth (1997) contend it is equally important that these and other positive values be modeled by adults with whom the child interacts.

In addition to the instruction of "I-messages" (Gibbs, 1994), Porter and Glass (as cited in Foltz-Gray, 1996) stress the importance of teaching children anti-victim techniques. They say these strategies begin with recognition of the debilitating nature

of fear and the provision of alternatives to it. These alternatives would include: ignoring, breaking eye contact, turning their bodies and walking away, asking others to stop unwanted behavior, talking in a brave voice, and/or joining a group according to Porter and Glass (as cited in Foltz-Gray, 1996). They state that role-playing is an important tool used in practicing these techniques and that the teacher has a vital role in instructing students and in creating parent/teacher training and partnerships.

Teacher's role. Freiberg (1996) feels that there are several important contributions teachers can make. These include providing consistency within the classroom, integrating social/emotional learning with literature, and finally, seeking and receiving professional development that increases their own level of social competency.

Literature shows that there are many positive effects that result from the teaching of social skills. Freiberg (1996) found long-term, significant differences in students who had received social skills instruction. When compared to control group students, they perceived their environment in a more positive way. Even if one were to consider children's perceptions as short-termed or short-sighted, Hawkins et al. (as cited in Cummings & Haggerty, 1997) identified long-term positive social benefits of a program entitled "Raising Healthy Children". This program showed an increase in positive attachment to family and school, and scores on standardized achievement tests, while indicating a decrease in aggression in boys, suspensions, expulsions, drug use, and delinquency. In our complex society, which has escalating social deterioration, these long-term positive effects are reason enough to institute a program of social skills instruction. Fortunately, the positive benefits don't end here. Lantieri and Patti (1996) found that "when children feel safe, respected, and empowered, learning of all kinds-from the most practical to the most intellectual-is enhanced" (p. 31). With this compelling evidence the teacher/researchers can not ignore the

imperative that has been presented for a social skills instruction program.

Project Objectives and Processes

As a result of social skills instruction, that stresses cooperation and conflict resolution, during the period of August, 1997 to February, 1998, the targeted 2/3 and 5th grade classes will decrease in discipline incidents, as measured by anecdotal records of disciplinary actions, teacher observation, behavior incident checklists, and individual behavior plans.

In order to accomplish the terminal objectives, the following processes are necessary:

1. A plan to develop cooperation through implementing cooperative learning strategies.
2. Direct instruction of conflict resolution principles.

Project Action Plan

There are two essential components in any social skills program. It is imperative for children to be able to work cooperatively with their peers. Joyce (as cited in Bellanca & Fogarty, 1991) reports "Research on cooperative learning is overwhelmingly positive and the cooperative approaches are appropriate for all curriculum areas. The more complex the outcomes (higher-order processing of information, problem solving, social skills and attitudes), the greater are the effects" (p. 4). The other vital component is the effective use of conflict resolution strategies. The ever-increasing evidence of violence in society has caused concern over conflict in the school environment. Every educator is aware that conflict disrupts learning. Conflict resolution programs have begun to be widely implemented in schools across the nation as a response to this growing concern. When one considers the reported positive benefits of conflict resolution programs (more instructional time,

higher standardized test scores, less time being spent on discipline, and a more positive school climate) the dramatic increase of school's implementation of these kinds of programs is easily understandable (Freiberg, 1996).

Teacher-researchers in the targeted 2/3 and 5th grade classes will implement these strategies within the context of their heterogeneous, self-contained classrooms over a period of 14 weeks. Instruction will take place four out of the five days of the school week. The rationale for this is that the fifth day may be a holiday, inservice, or a catch-up day. As often as possible, cooperative strategies will be integrated across all curricular areas. The instruction of conflict resolution will take place during class meetings where strategies are introduced through the use of literature. During the first three weeks of school these class meetings will occur four times a week. Thereafter, the frequency of the meetings diminishes; once a week, or as problematic conflicts arise.

During the first five weeks of school the basic elements of cooperative learning will be taught (Johnsons' Five Elements of Cooperative Groups as cited in Bellanca and Fogarty, 1991). Each element, after formal instruction, will be practiced in subject areas across the curriculum.

In the first week, lessons will be taught on positive interdependence. During this time students will be taught about sharing mutual goals, joint rewards, shared materials and information, and assigned roles. One of the ideas in addressing mutual goals is that two heads are better than one, and three are better than two, etc. This will be covered in a two-part lesson. To begin with, the definition of, and the necessity for cooperation will be addressed. This discussion will be followed by the use of a "getting to know you" people search (Appendix D), which will demonstrate how much more successful students can be when working together cooperatively. The next day a lesson on joint rewards will be taught. During this task the students will be asked to

complete a class puzzle cooperatively. Each child will decorate his own individual piece, and then the puzzle will be completed, mounted, and displayed as a visual reminder that when students work together they are unique parts of a special whole. The third day will focus on sharing materials and information. This activity will involve a small group of students sitting in a circle. Each group will have a large piece of butcher paper and one marker. The teacher will ask the students to draw an object (a house, a cat, or a car, for example). Each child may draw one line only and then must pass the marker to the next child. Every child will have a turn adding to the drawing until it is complete. A processing time will follow the activity where the PMI (positive, minuses, and interesting facts) strategy will be taught. The fourth day will center around discussion of assigned roles within the groups. Then the children will have an opportunity to decorate role cards that will be used throughout the year.

During the second week, the students will learn about face-to-face interaction. The activities will deal with active listening and summarizing, giving and receiving explanations, and elaborating our verbal responses. These concepts will be integrated within classroom discussions throughout the week. As directions are given, information is summarized, or clarified, and verbal responses are shared, the teacher-researcher will help children expand their ideas and understanding about each of these skills. Some strategies that will be used are: students will be asked to repeat information and directions; journals will be used to teach beginning, middle, and end; and students will be asked to expand their thoughts by asking, who, what, where, when, why, and how.

Week three will be a review of weeks one and two, and with a discussion of individual accountability. It is during this week that the mandatory district-wide Reading, Spelling, and Writing assessments are given and collected. This will be base-line data to track student progress throughout the year. Discussions will include

the life-long reality of individual accountability within family, school, and community.

The fourth week will focus upon interpersonal and small group skills. Topics covered will be communication, trust, and decision-making. One lesson will cover guidelines for cooperation during group work. These include: Use quiet (six inch) voices, keep heads together, take turns and share, stay with your group, ask your group for help ("ask three before me"), no put downs, listen to each other and encourage each other. Another lesson will be a funeral for put downs. First, the students will compile a list of put downs commonly used. A discussion will follow about how put downs have no place in effective human relationships. Then there will be a "funeral" for put downs. A shoe box, that has a tombstone heading, will be used to store the put downs, and then the box will be taken out of the room. Finally, an open-ended put-up list will be started which can be posted on a cooperative learning bulletin board or wall. "Me Bags" are a good way to teach communication and trust. The bag must be compiled at home and should be a collection of things that are meaningful to the student or reflect something special about he/she is as a person. They will share these bags with a partner and then using the 2-4-8 strategy, will pair off with another partnership to tell someone new about their initial partner's bag. Students need to actively listen so that they can effectively communicate their partner's information. Trust is built as students see the pride and pleasure that is received from being able to accurately communicate about the contents of their partner's "Me Bag". Other alternative strategies to build inclusion are a "me mobile" and an "All About Me" bulletin board which will display student interviews and personal pictures.

The last week, group processing skills will be highlighted. Processing is that critical portion of group time when discussion of goal attainment and effectiveness of working relationships takes place. Some of the strategies taught will be: D.O.V.E. guidelines (D.O.V.E. is an acrostic that stands for Defer judgment, Opt for original, Vast

number of ideas are best, and Expand by piggybacking), Stem statements (Appendix E), Mrs. Potter's Questions (Appendix F), PMI (Appendix G), wrap arounds, and KWL(H)'s. Journal reflections (Appendix H) will also be a method of processing group and individual work. In using these strategies (see samples in the appendices), the student will learn to be more reflective about how they have worked and how they can improve their teamwork. Verbal and non-verbal responses will also be taught. These will include: hurrahs, thumbs up, an "ok" signal, flicking of lights, or clapping signals.

To prepare for the instruction of conflict resolution strategies, the teacher-researcher first needs to have an established place in the room for a "Conflict Corner". (Appendix I) Material preparations for that corner will include: A "Talk It Out Poster", "Rules Poster", "I Message Poster" and corresponding worksheet (Appendix J), copies of "How to Help Children Resolve Their Conflict" script, copies of "Brainstorm Solutions Worksheet" (Appendix K), and "Problem Box". As each lesson is taught the corresponding materials will be posted in the Conflict Corner.

There will be five lessons, as described by Porro (1991), that will be taught consecutively in five Class Room Meetings. These lessons will be approximately 20 minutes in duration. Following is a summary of the content, materials, and procedures for each lesson.

Lesson one is entitled Introduction to Conflict Resolution. In a class discussion, conflict will be defined, examples of personal conflicts will be brainstormed, and predictions of ways of solving conflicts will be made. The story Dad Gummit and Ma Foot will be read and discussed to introduce three styles of resolving conflicts. The ideas of "talk it out", "fight it out" and "ignore the problem" will be discussed and students will have an opportunity to role-play a described scenario.

Lesson two is entitled How to Cool Down. The pre-prepared "How to Talk it Out Poster", a blank piece of butcher paper to brainstorm ideas of how to cool down , and

the book Gert and Freida will be needed. A definition of Cooling Down and why it's an important strategy will be discussed. This discussion should include personal experiences of how cooling down has helped solve a problem, and then time should be allotted for brainstorming ways to Cool Down. In addition to ideas the students share, taking deep breaths and a "draining" technique will be included. The book Gert and Freida will be read and discussed as an example of how much better relationships are conducted when friends take cool down time before tackling a dispute.

Lesson three is entitled How To Talk About Feelings. The "How to Talk it Out" poster and the book I Hate My Brother Anthony are the materials needed for this lesson. Here students will be taught that after they have cooled down, they will be ready to go to the other person and talk about their angry feelings. Next, they will learn about 'you messages" and "I messages", and discuss the differences between "I and You statements". In the Appendix there is a form used to assist the children in their implementation of "I messages". They will have opportunities to practice giving and receiving these forms of communication during the last part of this lesson.

Lesson four is entitled How To Listen. Once again the "Talk It Out Poster" and the book Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day will be used. The procedures for this lesson include a discussion of the purpose of listening, good and bad listening behaviors, instruction of HALT (Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired) hindrances to active listening, use of the mouth and ear cards to designate speaker and listener, and the use of a T-Chart to make visual what listening "sounds like" and "looks like". The book is used in a writing activity. The child has a choice to write a new ending or to describe how his day would have gone if people had listened to him.

Lesson five is entitled How To Find Fair Solutions. The "How to Talk It Out Poster", Brainstorm Solutions Worksheet, and "Rules Poster" will be used. First the

steps of the "Talking It Out Poster"will be discussed. These include the ideas: "find out what you both need, brainstorm possible solutions, choose the idea you both like best, make a plan, and decide when you will assess the effectiveness of the plan". Next, the rules for fair fighting will be defined and a policy will be established for the use of the Conflict Corner.

During weeks six to thirteen, the teacher-researchers will continue to use cooperative groups daily, with periodic reviews of the elements of cooperative learning. Class Meetings will continue on a weekly basis to address problems that arise and review strategies. Discussion, scripts, role playing, and literature will be used to strengthen the learned strategies.

The fourteenth week will be used to summarize and assess the social skills program. Students will create a class mural depicting a before and after scenario. On the before portion of the mural they will pictorially represent their previous cooperative and conflict resolution behaviors . The after portion will show how they work together and resolve conflicts now that the social skills training is complete.

Methods of Assessment

In order to assess the effects of these interventions, data will be gathered from behavior incident checklists, teacher observations, and evidence of changing or decreasing behavior plans.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this project was to stress cooperation and conflict resolution strategies to decrease discipline incidents. Cooperative learning structures and conflict resolution curriculum were implemented in order to effect the desired changes. Over a five month period these strategies were taught during formal and informal instructional settings. The curriculum was formally introduced in classroom meetings called Community Circle. In the 2/3 Multiage classrooms these meetings were held daily, and in the 5th grade classroom the meetings were conducted three times a week. Guided practice opportunities were provided in Community Circle and in cooperative groups in cross-curricular areas throughout the week. In order to measure the outcome of direct instruction of these strategies, data was collected during the first 5 weeks of school and during weeks 12 through 14 of the school year. In order to effect the necessary interventions an action plan was devised.

The action plan included lessons on cooperative learning and conflict resolution, with the addition of supplemental lessons and materials. The supplemental strategies were introduced during weeks 6 through 13. Cooperative learning was the first part of our instructional program.

Cooperative Learning

The components of cooperative learning were taught through lessons on positive interdependence, face-to-face interaction, individual accountability,

interpersonal and small group skills, and group processing skills. In the first week student activities focused on sharing mutual goals, joint rewards, shared materials and information, and assigned roles. Activities included discussion of these ideas, a class puzzle, a group drawing, and making and decorating role cards.

During the instruction of face-to-face interaction, activities focused on active listening and summarizing, giving and receiving explanations, and elaborating verbal responses. Students were asked to actively listen and then verbally summarize information and directions, journal summarization techniques, and expand their thinking by asking who, what, where, when, why, and how questions. These were called "fat" and "skinny" questions.

In week three we reviewed the first two weeks, as well as, discussed individual accountability. Mandatory district-wide assessments in Reading and Language Arts, given during this time, afforded the opportunity to discuss the life-long reality of individual accountability.

Week four was devoted to interpersonal and small group skills, and covered the topics of communication, trust, and decision-making. Lessons included guidelines for cooperation during group work, a funeral for put downs, and "Me Bags".

The last week highlighted group processing skills. Some strategies were: D.O.V.E. guidelines, Stem statements, Mrs. Potter's Questions, PMI wrap arounds, and KWL(H)'s. Journal reflections were also used as a method of group and individual processing. Verbal cues were taught and used as a method of getting attention and responding to stem-statements or evaluative comments. Following the instruction of the components of cooperative learning, conflict resolution lessons were instructed.

Conflict Resolution

There were five lessons, designed by Porro (1991) that were taught consecutively during the Community Circle meetings. Literature was an important part

of the introduction of concepts in each of these lessons.

Lesson one introduced the meaning of conflict and related this idea to personal situations that students might experience. During this lesson they talked about how conflicts escalate or de-escalate, according to their responses to them.

Lesson two taught students "cool down" techniques as an important first step that must be taken before solving any conflict. Students brainstormed many ways they might "cool down", and these ideas were recorded and saved to be placed on the conflict corner display.

Lesson three taught students how to appropriately confront another person in order to talk about their angry feelings. "I messages" were taught as a positive way of being assertive when angry.

Lesson four was a discussion about the purposes of active listening and "talking it out". The idea of HALT was introduced as a potential hindrance to active listening, and talking and listening cards were used as visual cues to alert students to their roles in a discussion. A T-Chart was made to make visual what listening "sounds like" and "looks like".

Lesson five instructed the students in how to find fair solutions to their conflicts. Also during this time a conflict corner was constructed from artifacts collected during the previous four lessons. This display was showcased in an accessible area in each classroom where students could go to to work out their conflicts. After these lessons were taught and consistently implemented, some supplemental lessons and activities were utilized to reinforce instructed concepts.

Supplemental Lessons and Activities

Subsequent to the formation of the action plan, Kovalik's (1994) ideas of Likeskills (Appendix L) and Life Long Guidelines (Appendix M) were considered to be an important addition to the curriculum. Each of the 17 lifeskills were introduced for a

two week period of time. During this time, literature, instruction, discussion, and team building activities were used to reinforce each of the targeted lifeskills. In addition, the 5th grade classroom made T-Charts for all the Life Long Guidelines (Appendix N).

Community Circle was an addition to the instructional plan. This idea was found in the writings of Kovalik (1991) and Gibbs(1994). Community Circle is predicated on the idea of Tribes, which are small community groups within the classroom, formed by using team building principles. Rather than rules, "agreements" are reached at the beginning of the year that govern the procedures used in the Community Circle time. During these daily meetings, activities lend to team building, inclusion, attentive listening, establishing trust, showing appreciation, and building mutual respect. These additions were used at both sites, however, some modifications were deemed necessary.

Modifications

One of the modifications made was a result of a change in student configuration. Student configuration was changed in two of the three classrooms when two children were moved to other sites due to behavioral problems. In one class a student was placed in a self-contained behavior disorder program. The other student was removed from the 5th grade classroom by parent request as a result of ongoing sexual harassment occurring between two students.

Another modification made was that Site B chose not to use all of the children's trade books listed in the action plan, that dealt with conflict resolution. Much of the literature was not age-appropriate for the older children. Alternate materials were used to support the lifeskills. In addition, more emphasis was placed on Life Long Guidelines than in the Site A classes.

A third departure from the original action plan occurred at Site B when Omni Youth Services, A United Way Agency, chose to execute its Second Step program

during the school day as opposed to its original after school time slot. This program teaches skills that can help children to get along with other people. The lessons are divided into three main areas: empathy, impulse control, and anger management. These lessons, occurring two half hours per week, were taught by a social worker employed by Omni. The program started in November and will conclude at the end of the school year. Students are taught about different feelings and ways to show understanding towards others. They also are given strategies to help them solve problems, apologize, deal with peer pressure, and set goals. Additionally, they learn how to manage their anger in ways that will not hurt others. As a result of this program, the classroom teacher at this site has been less involved in social skills instruction than otherwise might have occurred.

Cooperative Learning, Conflict Resolution, and life skills activities have been the philosophical infrastructure of this program. While there was a strong impression among the teacher researchers that this was an effective intervention, three forms of assessment were used to evaluate its successfulness.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

The three forms of assessment were utilized to track the progress made by the students during the intervention period included behavior incident checklists, teacher observations, and individual behavior plans. The first tool used was the behavior incident checklist.

Behavior Incident Checklist

In order to evaluate the effects of the social skills instruction program, weekly behavior incident checklists were maintained throughout the first 3 weeks of the school year and weeks 12 -14 of the intervention. The results of the behavior incident checklist tallies are listed in Table 6.

Table 6

Number of Incidents of Problematic Behavior During a 3 Week Period

Behaviors	Weeks 1-3		Weeks 12-14	
Sites	A	B	A	B
Respect				
Interrupting	83	17	28	9
Tattling	58	1	35	1
Name Calling	15	1	4	2
Yelling	20	1	2	0
Inappropriate Language	6	2	5	0
Calling Out	70	3	28	0
Pushing	13	0	4	3
Hitting	5	0	1	0
Kicking	3	0	0	0
Other's Property	15	1	1	0
Responsibility				
Following Directions	138	51	60	11
Listening	184	56	85	11
Off Task Behavior	166	53	74	24
Total	777	187	327	61

Table 6 indicates that there were decreases in every area. While there were universal declines in behavior incidents, the areas that were problematic in August continued to be troublesome in January. For example, following directions, listening, and off-task behaviors were areas of responsibility that were a major concern at the beginning of the school year. These behaviors remained the higher tallied behaviors

in January. Issues of respect that were problem areas in the fall had been interrupting, tattling, and calling out. In January it was found that there was a 66% decrease in incidents involving these behaviors. Behaviors that were not problematic in August were issues of respect, that would include name calling, yelling, inappropriate language, pushing, hitting, kicking, and respecting other's property. When tallies were tabulated in January, it was found that these areas were still not a significant problem. The behaviors, which were the highest tallies in weeks 1-3, remained the higher tallied behaviors in January. These finding were also supported by teacher observations.

Teacher Observations

At Site A, teacher observation supported the data collected from the behavior checklist. Conference notes, telephone conversations, and classroom anecdotal records maintained during the intervention supported the findings of the behavior checklist. There was a decrease in all problematic behavior areas. At Site B the teachers observed the primary problem area to be responsibility, which included following directions, listening, and off-task behavior. In all of these areas a decrease of incidents was observed during weeks 12 - 14. Individual behavior plans were a third means of assessing students' social growth.

Individual Behavior Plans

Site A had eight students on individual behavior plans at the beginning of the school year. By the end of the intervention, all of these had been removed from their plans, with no additional behavior plans having been implemented. At Site B no students have been on behavior plans this school year. Teacher observation and anecdotal records indicated that there were gains in social competency. The positive changes that occurred throughout the intervention reflected the effectiveness of a deliberate instructional plan for teaching proactive social behavior.

Conclusions and Recommendations

There were many positive outcomes experienced at both Sites A and B due to the teaching of cooperative learning, conflict resolution, and lifeskills instruction. Cooperative Learning had many benefits. It gave students a good structure for working together peacefully. Interpersonal skills will always be needed for successful life-long interactions with others. Group processing and reflection will also continue to be important tools that promote problem solving, decision making and self-evaluation that lead to personal growth. Rather than being a separate and distinct component of the plan, conflict resolution proved to be complimentary to cooperative learning.

Conflict resolution was the second vital part of the intervention that made a connection for students on an interpersonal level. Once the framework of a cooperative classroom was established, the students learned how to manage conflict. This included identifying conflicts and problems, learning to "cool down", giving "I Messages", using active listening, and finding fair solutions. This instruction allowed students to take ownership for their conflicts and make this transfer for life-long interactions. An additional positive aspect of this plan was the insertion of lifeskills instruction.

It was found that lifeskills instruction was successful on many levels. Using authentic literature proved to be a very positive instructional tool. It reinforced the students' awareness of lifeskills by identifying these qualities in characterization activities. Then students were able to transfer this awareness to personal experiences. Another positive result that was noted was the use of the T Chart at Site B. In using this graphic organizer to teach the Lifelong Guidelines, students thinking was promoted in the areas of comprehension, analysis, and evaluation. Both sites found the implementation of Community Circle to be an essential component of the intervention. Skills and behaviors enhanced through this group experience were team

building, inclusion, trust, and appreciation and mutual respect of others.

While each component in this intervention was important, the combination of the parts of the instructional plan created a synergy that went beyond the expectations of the teacher researchers. The addition of lifeskills instruction to the plan was a decided strength. Our data indicates positive movement in social competencies. While there are time constraints due to a full curriculum, the instruction and implementation of this plan was manageable. The additional time taken at the beginning of the year generated less teacher intervention as the year progressed due to student ownership for their conflicts and problems. Although there were many positives a few weaknesses in the plan were noted.

Site B found that the literature initially chosen to support the conflict resolution lessons was not age-appropriate. Therefore, additional materials had to be found. The Second Step Program conducted for the intermediate grades may not be available next year due to a possible loss of an existing grant.

Due to the success of this instructional plan both sites will continue to use these strategies in their classrooms and will encourage colleagues to consider implementing these interventions. Staff development will take place through peer coaching and inservicing opportunities.

Conflict is a natural part of life, but as research shows, violence is escalating due to an increasing lack of ability to peacefully solve problems. In the absence of positive leadership in many families and much of society, the onus of responsibility falls on the school to teach social competencies. The encouraging news is that brain research and biology supports the effectiveness of modifying social behavior with early intervention. Lantieri and Patti (1996) encourage schools to "intentionally create community and to pay attention to young people's social and emotional lives" (p. 29). It is imperative that schools educate the whole child.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A
Teacher Survey

Behavior Checklist

Over the period of August 27th through September 4th, please observe your class and indicate whether these behaviors are a problem for your students. A check mark means that 50% or more of your students do or do not exhibit this behavior. If your response is "unknown", please briefly explain your choice. Your input is especially important on the two questions at the bottom of the checklist.

Behaviors Needing Improvement	Yes	No	Unknown
Tattling			
Name Calling			
Respect			
Responsibility			
Impulsivity			
Sound decision making(conflict resolution, problem solving strategies, etc.)			
Empathy			
Other			

Why do you think these behaviors exist at our school?_____

_____

_____

_____

How do you think these behaviors can be improved?_____

_____

_____

_____

Name (optional)_____

Appendix B
Behavior Tally Sheet

Behavior Tally Sheet Date_____

Behavior	Number of Incidents

A. Respect:

1. Verbal:

*Tattling_____

*Name calling_____

*Yelling_____

*Inappropriate language_____

2. Physical

*Pushing_____

*Hitting_____

*Kicking_____

3. Other's property_____

B. Responsibility:

1. Following directions_____

2. Listening_____

3. On task behavior_____

Appendix C
Anecdotal Records

MY RESPONSIBILITY GOAL
HOW I WILL SOLVE MY PROBLEM

WHAT HAPPENED?

_____

_____

_____

IT WON'T HAPPEN AGAIN IF I_____

_____

_____

_____

THIS IS MY PLAN: (I Will list at least 3 steps.) _____

_____

_____

_____

STUDENT'S NAME & ROOM #_____

PARENT SIGNATURE_____

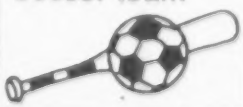
PRINCIPAL'S SIGNATURE_____

Appendix D
People Search

Find a Friend On a Rainy Day

Name _____

Make new friends. Walk around the room and have a classmate sign a square that tells something about him. Each classmate may only sign one square on each person's paper.

Has a cat	Is older than you	Has one older and one younger sister	Walks to school
Has a younger brother	Was born in another state	Has a birthday in April	Loves pizza
Has a black dog	Has a hamster	Likes to read	Has a white car
Has five people in his/her family	Loves to swim	Is on a baseball or soccer team 	Had an egg for breakfast

Appendix E
Stem Statements

Self-Evaluation Stem Statements

1. I contribute to my group by _____
_____.

2. A question I asked my group was_____
_____.

3. A question I answered for someone else was_____
_____.

4. An idea I accepted from someone else was_____
_____.

5. I think the most important group agreement was____
_____.

6. One reason a person might "pass" is_____
_____.

7. I showed respect to others by_____
_____.

8. Something that was hard for me was_____
_____.

9. Something that was easy for me was_____
_____.

Appendix F
Mrs. Potter's Questions

Mrs. Potter's Questions

Please answer Mrs. Potter's Questions as you finish your assignment.

1. What were you trying to do? (What was your assignment?) _____

_____

2. What went well in your group? _____

_____

3.What would you do differently the next time your group works together? _____

_____

4. Did you need any help? _____

_____

Appendix G
PMI Worksheet

P (Pluses)

M (Minuses)

I (Interesting things)

Appendix H
Journal Entry

My Reflections...
Date_____

WHAT? (What did we do well as a group today?)

_____
_____
_____
_____

SO WHAT? (Why is it important to work well as a group?)_____
_____
_____
_____

NOW WHAT? (What can do we do to work better as a group? _____
_____
_____
_____
_____

What can I do to be a better group member?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix I
Conflict Corner

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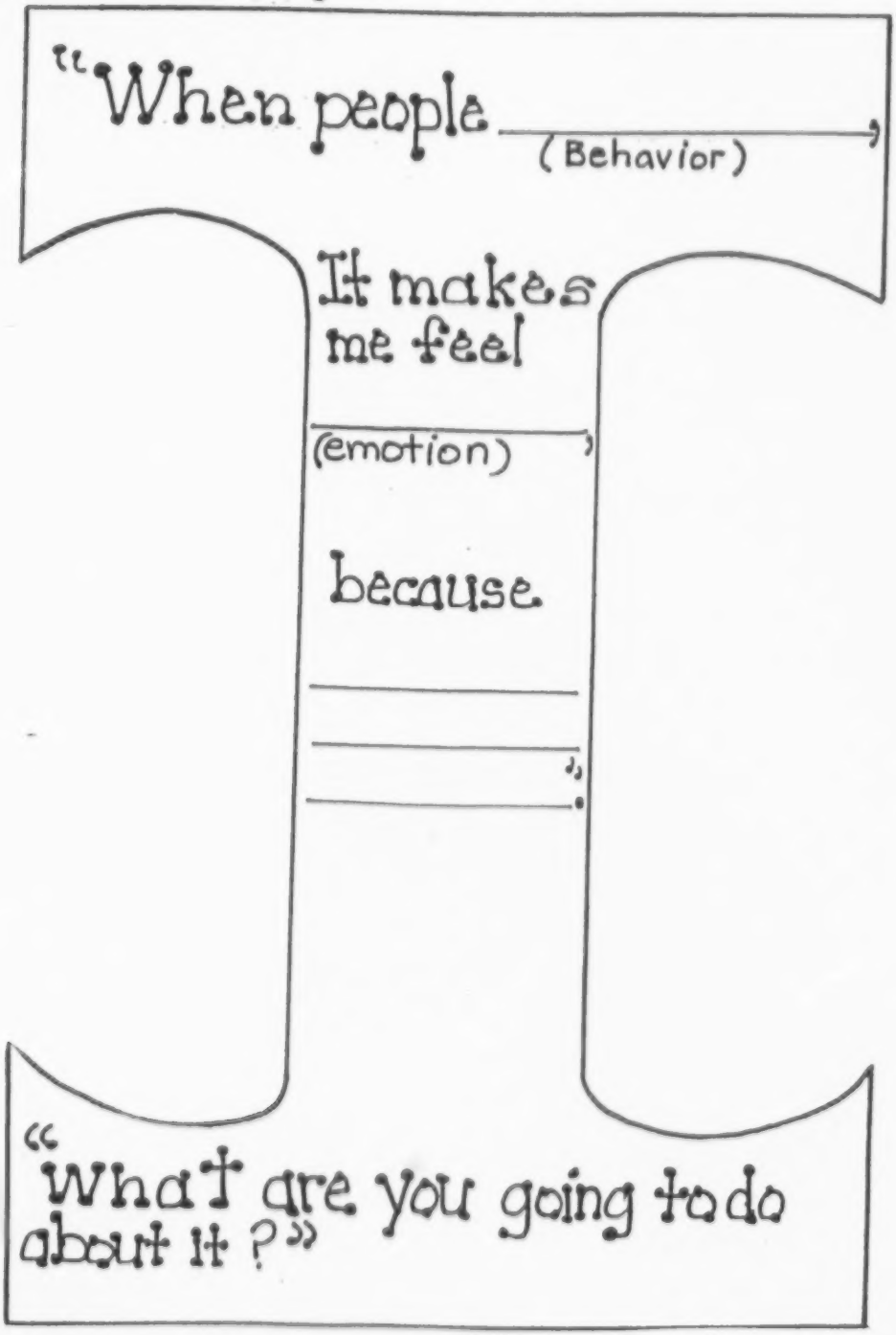
Appendix J
"I Message" Worksheet

Speaker says: Name:_____



Appendix K
Brainstorming Solutions Worksheet

BRAINSTORM SOLUTIONS WORKSHEET

The Problem: What can you do right now so that . . .

_____ & _____?
Child #1 gets what s/he needs — Child #2 gets what s/he needs

Ideas	How we feel about the idea. name	name
☐ _____	◯	◯
☐ _____	◯	◯
☐ _____	◯	◯
☐ _____	◯	◯
☐ _____	◯	◯
☐ _____	◯	◯
☐ _____	◯	◯

5. ✓ the idea(s) you both like best.

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Appendix L
Susan Kovalik's Lifeskills and Definitions

LIFESKILLS

INTEGRITY: To act according to a sense of what's right and wrong

INITIATIVE: To do something because it needs to be done

FLEXIBILITY: To be willing to alter plans when necessary

PERSEVERANCE: To keep at it

ORGANIZATION: To plan, arrange, and implement in an orderly way; to keep things orderly and ready to use

SENSE OF HUMOR: To laugh and be playful without harming others

EFFORT: To do your best

COMMON SENSE: To use good judgment

PROBLEM-SOLVING: To create solutions in difficult situations and everyday problems

RESPONSIBILITY: To respond when appropriate, to be accountable for your actions

PATIENCE: To wait calmly for someone or something

FRIENDSHIP: To make and keep a friend through mutual trust and caring

CURIOSITY: A desire to investigate and seek understanding of one's world

COOPERATION: To work together toward a common goal or purpose

CARING: To feel and show concern for others

PRIDE: A sense of one's own value; self-respect

COURAGE: Ability to persevere and withstand danger, difficulty,or fear

Appendix M
Susan Kovalik's Lifelong Guidelines and Definitions

Lifelong Guidelines

1. **Trustworthiness** - To act in a manner that makes one worthy of confidence

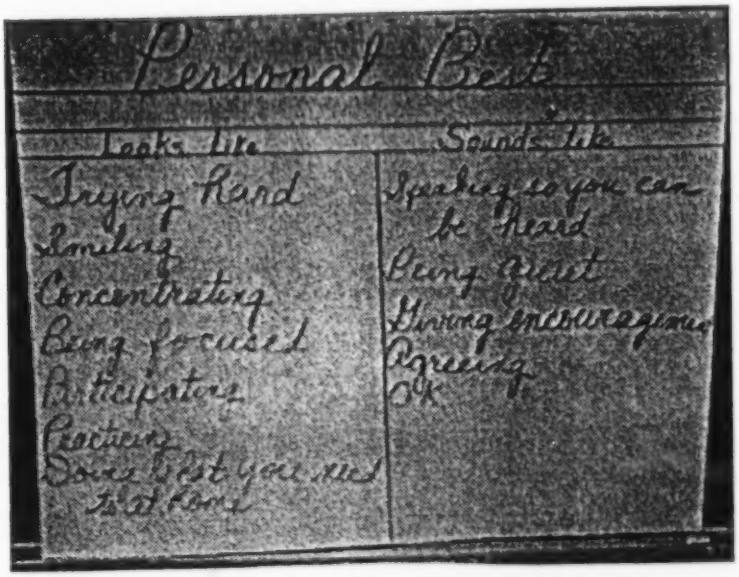
2. **Truthfulness** - Telling the truth is about personal responsibility and mental accountability

3. **Active Listening** - Listening with intention involves more than just hearing. It is the greatest gift we can give another.

4. **No Put-downs** - A put-down is a way of saying,"I am better than you, richer than you, smarter than you, have more options than you." The goal is to elevate the speaker to a position of being noticed, controlling the behavior of those around, undermining the relationship between people, sidetracking the real issues, promoting him/herself by creating a laugh at someone else's expense. The classroom must become an island where students can sort out what is true about themselves and what is not.

5. **Personal Best** - Personal best says it is not the teacher alone who determines success, but rather students are given guidelines to evaluate their own performance against some rather telling criteria.

Appendix N
Pictures of Lifelong Guidelines T-Charts



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